

ACCOUNT

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OF A LATE

REVIVAL OF RELIGION

IN A PART OF THE

HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND:

BY ALEXANDER STEWART,

MINISTER OF MOULIN.

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LETTER

TO THE REV. DAVID BLACK,

Minister of Lady Yester's Church, Edin.

*"And they passed through, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles,
and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."*

ACTS XV. 3.

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1800.



ACCOUNT
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MY DEAR SIR;

Moulin, 1st September 1800.

I WAS by no means surprised to find, by your late letters, that the communications which I had made to you, from time to time, concerning the state of religion in this part of the country, had been highly gratifying to our friends in Edinburgh. As you have signified to me the opinion of Dr Erskine, Dr Hunter, and other respected friends, that the happy revival of religion amongst us ought to be made more generally known, and that it might be useful to publish an account of it; I shall now endeavour to give a more circumstantial detail of its commencement and progress. I am able

to

to do this with tolerable correctness, as my memory is assisted by written notes. I have no doubt that the concern about religion, which has been lately awakened in this place, is already the ground of much rejoicing among the angels before the throne. Pity it should not also engage, as extensively as may be, the praises of our Christian brethren on earth.

The inhabitants of the Highlands have, as you know, the Scriptures in Galic, their native tongue. The New Testament, the book of Psalms, and the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, have been long read in the schools. By these means, the people in this part of the country had some knowledge of the principal events in the history of the creation and fall of man, and of our Saviour's life, death, resurrection, and ascension; they knew also some of the great outlines of Christian doctrine; but in general their knowledge of the principles of Christianity was superficial and confused, and their religious opinions were in many important points erroneous. Very few, indeed, knew the way in which the Gospel informs us a sinner may be reconciled to God. The
 opinion

opinion of their own works recommending them to the favour of God, and procuring a reward from his bounty, was almost universal. It discovered itself in their ordinary speech, in their common remarks on more solemn occasions, and in almost every religious sentiment that was uttered. Their apprehensions of the demerit and consequences of sin were exceedingly defective. I have heard many on a sick-bed, after acknowledging in common form that they were sinners, deny that they ever did any ill. And in the view of death, they have derived their hopes of future happiness from the reflection that they had never wronged any person. Very few seemed to annex any meaning to their words, when they said that they expected pardon for Christ's sake. Being without the true knowledge of God, of Christ, of the gospel, of their own character and state, they lived, as might be expected, to themselves and to the world. They were not indeed addicted to open vice, if we except lying and swearing. They were rather distinguished for sobriety, industry, and peaceable behaviour. But they were destitute of religious principle.

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Men may love and adore an unseen God ; but they cannot love or serve an unknown God. They may dread pain, or death, or eternal misery ; but that is not to fear God. Our people were strangers alike to the true fear, and to the true love of God. They had evidently little concern about the present or the future state of their souls. They attended church, and partook of the sacraments, and rested from their work on the Sabbath. But these outward observances were almost the only appearance of religion. There was little reading of the Scriptures at home ; little religious instructing of children ; hardly any family-worship ; no religious conversation ; no *labouring*, in any manner, for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. Even on the Lord's day, most of the time was spent in loitering, visiting, and worldly talk ; and on other days, religion was scarcely thought of.

In narrating the means by which the people were brought to pay a more serious attention to their eternal interests, it is necessary to say something of my own case. I was settled minister of this parish in 1786, at the age of twenty-two. Although I was not

not a "despiser" of what was sacred, yet I felt nothing of the power of religion on my soul. I had no relish for its exercises, nor any enjoyment in the duties of my office, public or private. A regard to character, and the desire of being acceptable to my people, if not the only motives, were certainly the principal motives, that prompted me to any measure of diligence or exertion. I was quite well pleased when a diet of catechising was ill attended, because my work was the sooner over; and I was always satisfied with the reflection, that, if people were not able, or did not chuse, to attend on these occasions, that was no fault of mine. I well remember that I often hurried over that exercise with a good deal of impatience, that I might get home in time to join a dancing party, or to read a sentimental novel. My public addresses and prayers were, for the most part, cold and formal. They were little regarded by the hearers at the time, and as little recollected afterwards. I preached against particular vices, and inculcated particular virtues. But I had no notion of the necessity of a radical change of principle; for I had not learned

learned to know the import of those assertions of Scripture, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature;" and, "that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." I spoke of making the fruit good; but I was not aware that the tree was corrupt, and must first be itself made good, before it could bear good fruit. The people however were satisfied with what they heard, and neither they nor I looked farther. Almost the only remark made by any one on the discourse, after leaving church, was, "What a good sermon we got to-day!" to which another would coldly assent, adding, "Many good advices do we get, if we did but follow them." Such a heartless compliment was all the improvement made of the discourse, and I believe all the fruit of my preaching. The hearers readily gave me credit for a desire to do my duty; and they as readily took credit to themselves for a willingness to be taught their duty. But whether any improvement was actually going forward; whether there was any increase of the fruits of righteousness, was a point

point which gave neither minister nor people much concern.

.If there were any persons in the parish at that time, who lived a life of faith, under the influence of pure evangelical principles, I did not know them, nor was I qualified to discern and understand what spirit they were of. I have since had reason to believe that there were a very few spiritually-minded persons; but their life was hid, and they had left this world, all but one or two, before they could acknowledge me as a brother. I was in a great measure ignorant of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the corruption of the human will, the fulness and freeness of the redemption which is in Christ, justification by faith, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency on the human soul; and what I knew not myself, I could not declare to others. I never thought of praying for divine direction in my search after divine truth. I believe I had read the Confession of Faith of our Church before I declared my belief of its contents; but I had taken little pains to compare it with the Scriptures. I certainly did not distinctly understand, nor was I at all persuaded of the

truth of many propositions contained in it. Yet I do not remember that I had any scruples about subscribing it as the confession of my faith, or about declaring my assent to it solemnly, in the presence of that congregation whereof I was about to take the pastoral charge.

While I was yet ignorant of the truth, and unacquainted with Christian experience, two persons, under conviction of sin and terrors of conscience, applied to me for advice. They supposed that one in the office of the ministry must of course be a man of God, and skilled in administering remedies for the diseases of the soul. They were widely mistaken in their judgment of me; for I had learned less of the practice than of the theory of pastoral duty. I said something to them in the way of advice, but it afforded them no relief. They were, however, under the care of the good Physician. He applied his own balm to their wounded spirits, and "healed and bade them live." Being progressively and effectually taught of God, they are both now established, judicious Christians. These are the first that appear to have been converted since my incumbency,

cumbency, but they cannot be reckoned the fruits of my ministry.

The Lord was now preparing to gather to himself a fuller harvest in this place. He might have removed me as an useless incumbrance, or rather an intervening obstacle, out of the way, and subjected me to the doom of the unprofitable servant; but he was graciously pleased to spare me, and visit me in mercy, and even to employ me as one of his instruments in carrying on his own work. Glory to his name, who commanded light to shine out of darkness.—The writings of pious men, which were put in my hands by one or another Christian friend, were made the means of bringing me acquainted with the truths of the gospel. Among these I may mention the works of the Rev. John Newton and Thomas Scott, as eminently useful to me. I was slow in receiving and embracing the doctrines maintained by these writers. By degrees however I was persuaded that they were agreeable to Scripture, and that no doubt they must be admitted as true. I therefore durst not preach any thing which I conceived to be directly contrary to these doctrines; but

but I brought them forward rarely, incor-
rectly, and with awkward hesitation. The
trumpet was sounded, but it gave an "un-
certain sound." My preaching now con-
sisted of a mixed kind of doctrine. I taught
that human nature is corrupt, and needs to
be purified; that righteousness cannot come
by the law; that we cannot be justified in
the sight of God by our own works; that
we can be justified only by the righteous-
ness of Christ, imputed to us, and received
by faith. But in explaining the nature of
saving faith, I conceived it as including ma-
ny of its effects; a cordial acceptance of
the plan of redemption by a Mediator, ar-
dent gratitude to God our Saviour on ac-
count of that redemption, devotedness to
his service, good-will to our brethren of
mankind; in a word, every pious and be-
nevolent disposition of heart. I thought
and taught, that, on our possessing *this* faith,
we should, in consideration of it, have an
interest in the redemption purchased by
Christ, and consequently be accepted by
God, and rewarded as righteous persons.
Thus, by a short circuit, I arrived at the
same point from which I had set out; still
resting

resting a sinner's acceptance with God on the conformity of his will to the divine law, and thus endeavouring to establish a human righteousness under the name of faith in Jesus Christ. It was plain indeed that this conformity of the will to the divine law could be but imperfect in this life; yet, imperfect as it was, it must, in my apprehension, be the ground of our justification and acceptance with God. Here I stumbled on that stumbling-stone of *sincere obedience*, in substance at least, if not in so many words; imagining, like many in whose writings I have since met with that opinion, that the great favour procured to men by Christ's sufferings and mediation, was a relaxation of the divine law; and that sincere, not perfect, obedience was all that was now required *. This was "another gospel," which

* As one specimen, I transcribe the following extract from the printed sermons of a clergyman deceased. "Religion, though it enjoins universal purity, an uniform obedience to its laws, and grants no license to sin, does not yet require a total exemption from all such failings as strict justice might pronounce faulty; does not expect in us such perfection as never to suffer ourselves to be surprised into actions which, upon a review, may appear censurable. For if this were the duty, these the terms prescribed

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which could never be owned by God as the gospel of his Son, nor accompanied by that sanctifying power which belongs exclusively to the truth. If it set any of my people on thinking, it only bewildered and misled them. They remained as before, unenlightened and unchanged.

The biographical sketches in the Evangelical Magazine were principal means of impressing my heart, of opening my eyes to perceive the truth, of exciting a love to godliness, and a desire after usefulness. The power of divine grace appeared illustrious in

“bed by religion, who could comply, or live up to such un-
 “finning purity? There is not a just man that liveth upon
 “the earth, and sinneth not. God alone is absolute, immu-
 “table holiness. He is indeed pure, unclouded light; and
 “in him is no darkness at all; no shades or spots in his
 “nature. But the brightest human virtue is shaded with
 “imperfections, and blotted with various defects. Our su-
 “preme Lawgiver, therefore, does not expect absolute per-
 “fection, but accepts us on the much lower condition of
 “sincerity, *i. e.* of a predominant purpose and inclination to
 “obey him, appearing in the habitual virtues of a good life.
 “This is all the obedience that human frailty can pay, and
 “all that the divine mercy exacts. This it is to keep inno-
 “cence, and take heed to the thing that is right; and that
 “this will bring peace to the mind, both in this life and in
 “the next, is a doctrine which this discourse is meant to il-
 “lustrate.” Carr’s Sermons, vol. iii. Sermon 13.

in the composure, the joy, the triumph, with which many pious Christians left the world, I saw their triumphant hope supported, not by a complacent reflection on a well-spent life, but by a confidence in the unmerited love of Christ, and in his power and willingness to save even the chief of sinners. I was particularly struck with the account of ministers, who had laboured with much diligence and success, and had died at an early period of life, full of good fruits ; while I, who had already lived longer, and been longer in the ministry than they, could not say that I had taken any pains with my people, nor that I had been the means of reclaiming one sinner from the error of his ways, or of saving one soul alive. The conversation and example of some persons of a truly spiritual mind, to whose acquaintance I was admitted, and who exhibited to my view what I found only described in written memoirs, conduced much to impress on my mind the truths with which I was gradually becoming more acquainted. I cannot omit mentioning, in this connection, the blessing I enjoyed in the preaching, the prayers, and the conversation, of that much favoured servant

vant of Christ, the Rev. Charles Simeon, of King's College, Cambridge. He was a man sent from God to me; was my guest for two days in June 1796, preached in my church, and left a favour of the things of God which has remained with us ever since,

From that time I began to teach and preach Jesus Christ, with some degree of knowledge and confidence. From August 1797 to January 1798, I preached a course of sermons on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; following, for the most part, the selection and order of texts in the tract entitled "Short Sermons*." I was now enabled

* The texts in the above-named pamphlet are as follows :
Matth. xvi. 26. What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

1 John iii. 4. Sin is the transgression of the law.

Rom. iii. 23. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Gal. iii. 10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.

Rom. vi. 23. The wages of sin is death.

Acts xvi. 30. What shall I do to be saved?

Mark i. 15. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.

1 Tim. i. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,

bled to shew, from Scripture, that all men are by nature enemies to God, disobedient to his law, and on that account exposed to his just indignation and curse. I therefore addressed them, not as persons who were already, from education, birth-right, or local situation, possessed of saving faith and other Christian graces, but as sinners, under sentence of death, and who had not as yet obtained mercy. I did not, as before, merely reprove them for particular faults or vices,

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ception, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

John vi. 37. Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Rom. v. 1. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. ii. 7. Unto you which believe he is precious.

Heb. xii. 14. Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Tit. ii. 13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Luke xi. 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Heb. xii. 27. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.

Heb. ii. 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

and urge them to the practice of particular virtues ; but told them, that the whole of their affections and inclinations needed to be pointed in a new direction, and even their virtues to be new-modelled. I showed, that this, supposing it done, could not atone however for past offences, nor wipe away guilt already contracted ; and that sin could not be remitted without satisfaction made to the broken law of God ; that neither could purity of heart, and constant obedience in future, recover their title to the reward of eternal life, which had been at first conferred as a free gift by God, and was now wholly forfeited by sin : yet that their case was by no means desperate ; for we had the glad tidings to tell, that God had made provision for the complete salvation of sinners ; that he had appointed his own eternal Son, in the human nature, to procure for sinners the pardon of sin, the renewing of their minds, and a title to glory, by his own obedience and sufferings ; that in conferring these blessings God acts as the sovereign dispenser of his own gifts, not in consideration of any merit (for there is none) in the person on whom he bestows them ; that a
conformity

conformity of our will to the law of God, which I formerly considered as the ground of our acceptance, was itself a gift bestowed by God, in consequence of his having first justified, accepted, and adopted us to be his children; that in this great salvation wrought out by Christ for sinners, love to God and man, an abhorrence of evil, and a disposition to what is good, were included as essential parts; inseparably connected with the rest; insomuch that if a man is not renewed in the spirit of his mind, neither are his sins pardoned, nor his person accepted with God. I urged them to attend to what the word of God declared to be their condition; not to be deceived with vain hopes of recommending themselves to his favour by their own exertions; but as humble needy supplicants, to apply to him, through the merits of Christ, for pardon, and the gift of his Spirit to make them serve him with fidelity and delight; to be diligent in studying the word of truth, which alone can make us wise unto salvation; and having obtained grace from God, to practise diligently every active and every self-denying duty, and to abound in good fruit, to their
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own advancement in holiness and comfort, to the temporal and spiritual benefit of their fellow-creatures, and to the praise of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. I thought it right often to caution them against judging of their state by transient impressions or emotions of which they might be conscious; but only by a prevailing habitual preference of God's honour and service to their own gratification, appearing in the uniform tenor of their purposes and actions.

The novelty of the matter, and some change in my manner of preaching, excited attention. People began to think more, and sometimes to talk together, of religious subjects, and of the sermons they heard. But I did not yet know of any deep or lasting impressions having been made. The two persons before mentioned as earliest converted, had by this time got clearer views of the gospel, were enabled to derive comfort from the word of salvation, and began to bear their testimony to the grace of God their Saviour. They were in use of visiting occasionally a poor infirm woman, who had long walked with God, and
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who now lived alone in a mean cottage in the neighbouring village. It was proposed that they should come together to her house at a time appointed, and that I and some of my family should join them, and spend an evening hour or two in reading, conversation and prayer. In process of time, different persons, who were enquiring after the one thing needful, hearing how we were employed, and believing that God was with us, were at their own request admitted of our party. In this poor woman's little smoky hovel, we continued to hold our weekly meetings, to August 1799, when she was called away to join the general assembly of the first-born above. Her growth in grace had been very conspicuous, and her death was triumphant.

In summer 1798, the Lord's supper was dispensed in our congregation, at the usual time of the year. For some weeks before, I endeavoured in preaching to explain more fully, and with more application to the conscience, the nature of the ordinance; and the character of those who, under the denomination of disciples, were commanded to keep it. The exhortations and warnings
then

then given appeared to be accompanied with a divine blessing. Some of the ordinary communicants, judging themselves to be in an unconverted state, kept back, of their own accord, from partaking of the sacrament. Others, after conversing with me privately on the subject, took the same resolution. Many of those who might otherwise have applied for admission, forbore to apply. I inferred this from the comparatively small number of persons applying. For some years before, the number of candidates for admission each summer amounted to thirty, forty, and sometimes near fifty. In summer 1798, there were not above twelve; of whom nine were admitted. The sacrament was dispensed the same year again in November, on which occasion there were only six more new communicants admitted.

Although the number of communicants was thus, for the time, diminished, yet the number of those who were brought under concern about their eternal interests was increasing. This concern showed itself chiefly among the younger people under twenty-five or thirty. Their knowledge was yet imperfect.

imperfect. A natural shyness often hindered them long from discovering to others what they thought or felt. They had as yet no friend or intimate whom they judged able, from experience, to understand their situation, or to give them counsel. Some of them began to visit one of the two earlier converts formerly mentioned, from whose reading and conversation they derived considerable benefit. By means of this common friend, they were brought more acquainted with each other. One might now observe at church, after divine service, two or three small groups forming themselves round our few more advanced believers, and withdrawing from the crowd into the adjacent fields, to exchange Christian salutations, and hold Christian converse together; while a little cousin, or other young relative, followed as a silent attendant on the party, and listened earnestly to their religious discourse.

As the sacrament of the Lord's supper had been much abused, by admitting, without strict examination or special instruction, all candidates who could give a tolerable answer to common questions, and who were
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free from grosser immoralities ; so it must be confessed that the sacrament of baptism had been still more profaned. Nothing but one kind of scandal was understood to preclude a man from admission to this ordinance. Gross ignorance, or immoral behaviour, only laid a man open to some admonition or reproof ; or at most laid him under the necessity of procuring another sponsor ; but hardly ever hindered the baptism of his child. Nothing subjects a man to greater disgrace and obloquy among us, than to have his child remain unbaptized. The dominion of custom in this matter is so despotic, that most parents would chuse rather to carry their children a hundred miles to be baptized by a Popish priest, than to be refused baptism when they demand it. The superstitious notions, and other abuses, attending our celebration of this sacrament, called loudly for reformation. Last year, I preached a short course of sermons on baptism. At the same time, agreeably to a recent resolution and recommendation of the presbytery to which I belong, I revived the laws of the church which had fallen into disuse, relative to this ordinance,

ordinance, particularly that which prohibits private baptism. *Acts of Assemb.* 1690. X. Whenever I baptize a child on a week-day, whether in the church or elsewhere, I give previous intimation of sermon, and after preaching I administer the ordinance in the presence of the congregation. By these means many have been brought to understand better the nature of this sacrament, and to attend to it with more reverence. It had been long customary for the parent to give an entertainment, according to his station, to his neighbours and connections, immediately after the baptism; by which means this sacred ordinance, instead of being regarded as a most solemn religious service, had degenerated into an occasion of carnal mirth and festivity. The more religiously disposed amongst us have set the example of discontinuing this practice.

In February 1799, it pleased God to call home my dear wife, after we had been married little more than five years. She too had been growing in grace during the last two years of her life. She laboured for some months under a gradual decline, which impaired her strength, and occasioned some-

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times a languor of spirits ; but her faith and trust in her Redeemer were on the whole uniform and steady. Her dismissal from the body was gentle, without pain or struggle. Her meek and humble behaviour, her growing love to her Saviour, and the joy she expressed at the prospect of being soon with him, were blessed to the edification of our pious neighbours, who often called to visit her.

The following month, March 1799, I began a course of practical sermons on Regeneration, which I continued to the beginning of July following. These were attended with a more general awakening than had yet appeared among us. Seldom a week passed in which we did not see or hear of one, two, or three persons, brought under deep concern about their souls, accompanied with strong convictions of sin, and earnest enquiry after a Saviour. It was a great advantage to these that there were others on the road before them ; for they were seldom at a loss now to find an acquaintance to whom they could freely communicate their anxious thoughts. The house of one of our most established Christians

stians became the chief resort of all who wished to spend an hour in reading or conversing about spiritual subjects. Some who had but newly begun to entertain serious thoughts about religion, and who had not yet come so far as to speak out their mind, would contrive an errand to this person's house, and listen to her talk. She was visited at other times by those who were drawn only by curiosity or a disputatious spirit, who wanted to cavil at her words, or draw her into controversy. Such visitors she did not avoid, and at last they ceased to trouble her.

Other experienced Christians among us have been extremely useful to their younger brethren or sisters. Their conversation and example have been principal means of turning the attention of the young to religion, and of edifying those who have been already awakened. Such persons I find most serviceable auxiliaries. If they be neither *prophets* nor *apostles* nor *teachers*, yet their usefulness in the church entitles them to the appellation of *helps*, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Nor do I think an apostle would hesitate to acknowledge them, both men and women,

in the relation of *fellow-labourers*, Phil. iv. 3. Nor has success in this divine work been confined to instruments raised up among ourselves. The same happy effects have, in a certain measure, attended the preaching, the prayers, or conversation of pious brethren, who have assisted at the celebration of the Lord's supper, or made us other occasional visits.

It is observable that the work of conversion has been begun and carried on among this people, in a quiet manner without any confusion, and without those ungovernable agitations of mind or convulsions of the body, or shrieking or fainting, which have often accompanied a general awakening in other places. One young woman was so much moved in church, in March 1799, that she wept bitterly, and her friends thought it prudent to convey her out a little before the congregation was dismissed. She was for five or six days unfit for going about her usual work. In June following, at the time of our sacrament, she felt emotions of joy, for a few days, to such a degree as to withdraw her regard in a great measure from sensible objects. Spiritual
affections

affections were unusually strong in her, and spiritual objects appeared visible and near; but her sentiments were quite correct and scriptural. A few days afterwards, when her emotions had subsided, she told me that she was at the time sensible that her mind was somewhat unsettled, but that she found comfort in recollecting the apostle's words, "If we are besides ourselves, it is to God." This was exactly her case. She continues a humble lively Christian, and, except these two short intervals, she has regularly performed her ordinary work as a maid-servant, to the satisfaction of her master and mistress, in whose service she still remains. Another woman, the mother of a family, in April last, was so much moved in hearing sermon, that of her own accord she left the church. Excepting these two instances, I know of none whose emotions under the preaching of the word discovered themselves in any other manner, than by silent tears.

Having lately made an enumeration of those of our congregation, whom, to the best of my judgment, I trust I can reckon truly enlightened with the saving knowledge of Christ,

Christ, I find their number about seventy. The greater part of these are under thirty years of age. Several are above forty; six or seven above fifty; one sixty-six; and one above seventy. Of children under twelve or fourteen, there are a good many who seem to have a liking to religion; but we find it difficult to form a decided opinion of their case. Of persons who have died within these twelve months, three we are persuaded, and we hope two or three others, have slept in Jesus.

A very considerable number are friendly to religion, and countenance and defend the truth, even while they do not, as yet, appear to live under its power. A few among ourselves did for a while jeer and deride the godly; but such persons are left in so very small a minority, that they have ceased to be troublesome. The Scriptures too are so generally read and referred to, that the truth itself serves to stop the mouth of scoffers. We are sometimes told that the sentiments and language of our people, are much misrepresented, and are the object of much wonder and ridicule and invective, in other places. But we only hear of such things;

things ; they are hardly permitted to come nigh us. The chief opposition arises from those who possess superior scholarship and acquaintance with the Scriptures. These contend that there can be nothing substantial or necessary in that experimental knowledge which illiterate persons may pretend to have attained ; and that it is mere arrogance in them to imagine that they can have a larger share of saving knowledge, than men who are greater scholars and better versed in the Scriptures. “ Are we blind also ? ” has ever been the indignant language of carnal wisdom, of literary pride, and of self-righteous presumption.

It is evident that the Scriptures represent all mankind as divided into two classes. These are distinguished from each other in the most explicit manner ; and the distinction is marked by the strongest language, and the most significant comparisons. They are called the children of God, and the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. ; the children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked one, Mat. xiii. 38. ; the just and the wicked, Mat. xiii. 49. ; they who are dead in trespasses and sins, and they who are quickened

quickened together with Christ, Eph. ii. 1,—6. They are compared to wheat and tares, Mat. xiii. 25.; to good and bad fishes, Mat. xiii. 47, 48.; to sheep and goats, Mat. xxv. 32. In the general tenor of my preaching, especially in discussing the important doctrine of regeneration, I have endeavoured to keep in view this distinction, and to exhibit it clearly to the notice of my hearers. Many have been not a little offended at such a discrimination; have found fault with the preacher; have complained of uncharitable judgment; pleading that it was God's prerogative to judge the heart; that they hoped theirs was good though they did not make such a parading profession of religion, &c. The truth has prevailed however; and some have confessed to me that their first serious thoughts about the state of their souls arose from the surprise and resentment they felt, on being classed, under the character of unbelievers, along with murderers and idolaters, Rev. xxi. 8. But in giving such offensive, though necessary warnings, I had much need of the Spirit of Christ to repress all asperity of language and manner, to awaken tender compassion
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for those whom I addressed, and to enable me to speak the truth in love.

I observe among our young converts a considerable variety of frames, but a striking uniformity of character. They are dejected or elevated, according as their regard is more fixed on their own deficiencies and corruptions, or on the glorious sufficiency of Christ. But all of them are characterised by lowliness of mind, by a warm attachment to each other, and to all who love the Lord Jesus, and by the affections set on things above. I know no instances among them of persons trusting, for comfort or direction, to dreams or visions, impulses or impressions; and hardly an instance of seeking comfort from external signs or tokens, arbitrarily assumed by the enquirer, after the example of Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 14. and of Gideon, Judg. vi. 36,—40.

We have not yet to lament any great falling off in those who appeared to have once undergone a saving change. There may be persons who were for a time enquiring, with some apparent earnestness, and afterwards fell back to their former unconcern. I have reason to suspect that there

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may be several in this situation, though I have not access to know the exact state of their minds. May the Lord discover it to themselves in time! But all, so far as I know, who seemed to have been once truly humbled for their sins, and made to feel in their hearts the grace of God in the gospel, continue thus far to maintain a humble, spiritual, conscientious walk. They have a constant appetite for the sincere milk of the word, and for Christian fellowship with one another. The younger sort have lost their former levity of speech and behaviour, and are become devout and sober-minded; those more advanced in life have laid aside their selfishness and worldly-mindedness, and are grown humble, contented, and thankful.

The external effects of a general concern about religion have appeared in the behaviour even of those who do not seem to have experienced a change of heart. While the younger people attended a Sabbath school, those who were grown up used to spend the evening of that day in sauntering about the fields and woods in gossiping parties, or visiting their acquaintance at a distance, without improving their time by any profitable exercise.

exercife. Now there is hardly a lounge to be feen; nor any perfon walking abroad, except going to fome houfe or meeting where he may hear the Scriptures read.—Swearing, profane talking, foolifh and indecent jefting, have in a great meafure ceafed.—At *late wakes*, where people afsemble to watch by the body of a deceased neighbour, the whole night ufed to be fpent in childifh, noify fports and paffimes. Even the apartment where the corpe lay was the fcene of their revelry. This unnatural cuftom, which is ftill pretty general over a great part of the Highlands, is almoft wholly difcontinued in this part of the country. They ftill afsemble on fuch occafions, but they pafs the time in reading the Bible or fome religious book, and in fober converfation.

In reply to your request of relating a few of the more remarkable cafes of converfion, which have occurred among this people, I muft fay, that I have little uncommon to communicate. I have mentioned already, that almoft all our converts have been brought to ferious concern and enquiry, in a quiet gradual manner. To an intelligent obferver, the change
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in the conversation, temper, deportment, and the very countenance of individuals, is striking; the change too on the general aspect of the manners of the people is conspicuous. The effect is thus, on the whole, obvious; yet there are few particulars in the case of each person, which, taken singly, will appear uncommon, or worthy of being detailed in a separate narrative. We have no instances of persons remarkable for profligacy of manners or profaneness of speech, who have been reclaimed from such enormities; because there was none of that description to be found in our society. The change has been from ignorance, and indifference, and disrelish of divine things, to knowledge, and concern, and spiritual enjoyment. Neither are there among us examples of persons suddenly struck and impressed by some alarming event, or singular interposition of Providence. The word of truth proclaimed in public, or spoken in private, has been almost the only outward mean of producing conviction of sin, and confidence in the Saviour. In every single case, the power of God is visible in the effect produced; but there is little “diversity of
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of operation." Instead of endeavouring to paint the beauties of holiness in the scene around me, I rather wish to prevail with you, and other friends who know how to enjoy such a spectacle, to "come and see."

I have thus, my dear Sir, endeavoured to give a concise view of the prosperous state of religion in this congregation, for the last two or three years. We still have the happiness to find, from week to week, that the same concern and awakening is spreading around, and extending to some neighbouring congregations. Within these few weeks, persons from six and seven miles distance have called here on a Sabbath morning, under evident concern about their souls. On a succeeding Sabbath, the same persons have called again, introducing a relation or fellow-servant, under similar concern. All of these, so far as can be judged from present appearances, are in a hopeful way. Such is the manifold grace and loving-kindness with which it has pleased the Lord to visit this corner of his vineyard. I trust that all our Christian brethren, who may receive the joyful intelligence, will join us
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in praying that God may continue to water, with showers of blessings, "this vine which his own right hand hath planted;" and that no boar from the wood may be allowed to waste it, nor worm at the root to smite it that it wither.

I am, &c.



THE END.